

The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

(MRS. POST WHEELER)
ILLUSTRATED BY LAUREN STOUT

Copyright 1912 by DORRIS-MERRILL CO.
SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—John Valiant, a rich society favorite, suddenly discovers that the Valiant corporation, which his father founded and which was the principal source of his wealth, has failed.

CHAPTER II—He voluntarily turns over his private fortune to the receiver for the corporation.

CHAPTER III—His entire remaining possessions consist of an old motor car, a white bull dog, and Damory court, a neglected estate in Virginia.

CHAPTER IV—He learns that this estate came into the family by royal grant and has been the possession of the Valiants ever since.

CHAPTER V—On the way to Damory court he meets Shirley Dandridge, an attractive beauty, and decides that he is going to like Virginia immensely.

CHAPTER VI—An old negro tells Shirley's fortune and predicts great trouble for her on account of a man.

CHAPTER VII—Uncle Jefferson, an old negro, takes Valiant to Damory court.

CHAPTER VIII—Shirley's mother, Mrs. Dandridge, and Major Britton exchange reminiscences during which it is revealed that the major, Valiant's father, and a man named Samsom, were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge in her youth.

CHAPTER IX—Valiant finds Damory court overgrown with weeds and creepers, and the buildings in a very much neglected condition. Uncle Jefferson and Aunt Daphne, engaged as servants.

CHAPTER X—Valiant explores his ancestral home. He is surprised by a fox hunting party which invades his estate. He recognizes Shirley at the head of the party.

CHAPTER XI—He gives sanctuary to the cornered fox. He discusses the advent of the new owner and recalls the tragedy in which the elder Valiant took part.

CHAPTER XII—Valiant decides to rehabilitate Damory court and make the land produce a living for him.

CHAPTER XIII—He meets Shirley, who has been gathering flowers on the Valiant estate, and reveals his identity to her.

She glanced at him covertly, annoyedly sensible of the impropriety of the discussion, since the man discussed was certainly his patron, maybe his friend. But his insistence had roused a certain balky willfulness that would have its way. "It's true, I've never seen him," she said, "but I've read about him a hundred times in the Sunday supplements. He's a regular feature of the high-roller section. His idea of a good time is a dog-banquet at Sherry's. Why, a girl told me once that there was a cigarette named after him—the Vanity Valiant!"

"Isn't that beside the point? Because he has been an idler, must he necessarily be a vandal?"

She laughed again. "He wouldn't call it vandalism. He'd think it decided improvement to make Damory Court as frantically different as possible. I suppose he'll erect a glass cupola and a porte-cochere, all up-to-date and varnished, and put orchid hot-beds, where the wilderness garden was, and a modern marble cupid instead of the summer-house, and lay out a kite-shaped track."

Everything that was impulsive and explosive in John Valiant's nature came out with a bang. "No!" he cried, "whatever else he is, he's not such a preposterous ass as that!"

She faced him squarely now. Her eyes were sparkling. "Since you know him so intimately and so highly approve of him—"

"No, no," he interrupted. "You mistake me. I shouldn't try to justify him. His flush had risen to the roots of his brown hair, but he did not lower his gaze. Now the red color slowly ebbed, leaving him pale. "He has been an idler—that's true enough—and till a week ago he was idiotically rich. But his idling is over now. At this moment, except for this one property, he is little better than a beggar."

She had taken a hasty step or two back from him, and her eyes were now fixed on his with a dawning half-fearful question in them.

"Till the failure of the Valiant Corporation, he had never heard of Damory Court, much less been aware that he owned it. It wasn't because he loved it that he came here—no! How could it be? He had never set foot in Virginia in his mortal life."

She put up her hands to her throat with a start. "Come?" she echoed. "Come!"

"But if you think that even he could be so crassly stupid, so monumentally blind to all that is really fine and beautiful—"

"Oh!" she cried with flashing comprehension. "Oh, how could you!"

He nodded curtly. "Yes," he said. "I am that haphazard harlequin, John Valiant, himself."

CHAPTER XIV.

On the Edge of the World.

There was a pause not to be reckoned by minutes but suffocatingly long. She had grown as pale as he. "That was ungenerous of you," she said then with icy slowness. "Though

no doubt you found it entertaining. It must have still further aroused you to be taken for an architect?"

"I am flattered," he replied, with a trace of bitterness, "to have suggested even for a moment, so worthy a calling."

At his answer she put out her hand with sudden gesture, as if bluntly thrusting the matter from her consideration, and turning went back along the tree-shaded path.

He followed glumly, gnawing his lip, wanting to say he knew not what, but wretchedly tongue-tied, noting that the great white moth was still waving its creamy wings on the dead stump and wondering if she would take the cape jessamines. He felt an embarrassed relief when, passing the roots where they lay, she stooped to raise them.

Then all at once the blood seemed to shrink from his heart. With a hoarse cry he leaped toward her, seized her wrist and roughly dragged her back, feeling as he did so, a sharp sting on his instep. The next moment, with clenched teeth, he was viciously stamping his heel again and again, driving into the soft earth a twisting root-like something that slapped the brown wintered leaves into a hissing turmoil.

He had flung her from him with such violence that she had fallen sideways. Now she raised herself, kneeling in the feathery light, both hands clasped close to her breast, trembling excessively with loathing and feeling the dim earth-floor billow like a canvas sea in a theater. Little puffs of dust from the protesting ground were wreathing about her set face, and she pressed one hand against her shoulder to repress her shivers.

"The horrible—horrible—things!" she said whisperingly. "It would have bitten me!"

He came toward her, panting, and grasping her hand, lifted her to her feet. He staggered slightly as he did so, and she saw his lips twist together oddly. "Ah," she gasped, "it bit you! It bit you!"

"No," he said, "I think not."

"Look! There on your ankle—that spot!"

"I did feel something, just that first moment," he laughed uncertainly. "It's queer. My foot's gone fast asleep."

Every remnant of color left her face. She had known a negro child who had died of a water-moccasin's bite some years before—the child of a house-servant. It had been wading in the creek in the gorge. The doctor had said then that if one of the other children—

She grasped his arm. "Sit down," she commanded, "here, on this log, and see."

Her pale right caught him. He obeyed, dragged off the low shoe and bared the tingling spot. The firm white flesh was puffing up around two tiny blue-mottled punctures. He reached into his pocket, then remembered that he had no knife. As the next best thing he knotted his handkerchief quickly above the ankle, thrust a stick through the loop and twisted it till the ligature cut deeply, while she knelt beside him, her lips moving soundlessly, saying over and over to herself words like these: "I must not be frightened. He doesn't realize the danger, but I do! I must be quite collected. It is a mile to the doctor's. I might run to the house and send Uncle Jefferson, but it would take too long. Besides, the doctor might not be there. There is no one to do anything but me."

She crouched beside him, putting her hands by his on the stick and wrenching it over with all her strength. "Tighter, tighter," she said. "It must be tighter." But, to her dismay, at the last turn the improvised cord snapped, and the released stick flew a dozen feet away.

Her heart leaped chokingly, then dropped into hammer-like thudding. He leaned back on one arm, trying to laugh, but she noted that his breath came short and that he had been wincing. "Absurd!" he said, frowning. "How such a fool thing can hurt!"

Suddenly she threw herself on the ground and grasped the foot with both hands. He could see her face twitch with shuddering, and her eyes dilating with some determined purpose.

"What are you going to do?"

"This," she said, and he felt her shrinking lips, warm and tremulous, pressed hard against his instep.

He drew away sharply, with savage denial. "No—no! Not that! You shan't! My lord—you shan't!" He dragged his numbing foot from her desperate grasp, lifting himself, pushing her from him; but she fought with him, clinging, panting broken sentences:

"You must! It's the only way. It was a moccasin, and it's deadly. Every minute counts!"

"I won't, no, stop! How do you know? It's not going to—here, listen! Take your hands away. Listen!—Listen! I can go to the house and send Uncle Jefferson for the doctor and he—No! stop, I say! Oh—I'm sorry if I hurt you. How strong you are!"

"No! Your lips are not for that—good God, that damnable thing! You yourself might be—"

"Let me! Oh, how cruel you are! It was my fault. But for me it would never have—"

"No! I would rather—"

"Let me! Oh, if you died!"

With all the force of her strong young body she wrenched away his protesting hands. A thrust and a stick-fish feeling were upon him, a curious irresponsible giddiness, and her hair which that struggle had brought in tumbled masses about her shoulders, seemed to have little flames running all over it. His foot had entirely lost its feeling. There was a strange weakness in his limbs.

Moments of half-consciousness, or consciousness jumbled with strange imaginings, followed. At times he felt the pressure upon the wounded foot, was sensible of the suction of the young mouth striving desperately to draw the poison from the wound.

From time to time he was conscious of a white desperate face bared with hair that was a mist of woven sparkles. At times he thought himself a recumbent stone statue in a wood, and her a great tall golden-headed flower lying broken at his feet. Again he was a granite boulder and she a vine with yellow leaves winding and clinging about him. Then a blank—a sense of movement and of troubling disturbance, of insistent voices that called to him and inquisitive hands that plucked at him, and then voices growing distant again, and hands falling away, and at last—silence.

Inky clouds were gathering over the sunlight when Shirley came from Damory Court, along the narrow wood-path under the hemlocks, and the way was striped with blue-black shadows and filled with sighing noises. She walked warily, halting often at some leafy rustle to catch a quick breath of dread. As she approached the tree-roots where the cape jessamines lay, she had to force her feet forward by sheer effort of will. At a little distance from them she broke a stick and with it managed to drag the bunch to her, turning her eyes with a shiver from the trampled spot near by. She picked up the flowers, and trailing with caution, retraced her steps to the wider path.

She stepped into the Red Road at length in the teeth of a thunderstorm, which had arisen almost without warning to break with the passionate intensity of electric storms in the South.

There was no shelter, but even had there been, she would not have sought it. The turbulence of nature around her matched, in a way, her own strained feeling, and she welcomed the fierce bulge of the wind in the up-blowing whorls of her hair and the drenching wetness of the rain. She tried to fix her mind on near things, the bending grasses, the scurrying red runnels and flapping shrubbery, but her thoughts wildly escaped the tether, turning again and again to the events of the last two hours. She pictured Uncle Jefferson's eyes rolling up in ridiculous alarm, his winnowing arm lashing his indignant mule in his fight for the doctor.

At the mental picture she choked with hysterical laughter, then cringed suddenly against the sopping bark. She saw again the doctor's gaze lift from his first examination of the tiny punctures to send a swift penetrant glance at her, before he bent his great body to carry the unconscious man to the house. Again a fit of shuddering swept over her. Then, all at once, tears came, strangling sobs that bent and swayed her. It was the discharge of the Leyden jar, the flooding of the tense bow-string and it brought relief. After a time she grew quieter. He would get well! The thought that perhaps she had saved his life gave her a thrill that ran over her whole body. And until yesterday she had never seen him! She knelt in the blurred half-light, pushing her wet hair back from her forehead and smiling up in the rain that still fell fast. In a few moments she rose and went on.

At the gate of the Rosewood lane stood a mail-box on a cedar post and she paused to fish out a draggled Richmond newspaper. As she thrust it under her arm her eye caught a word of a head-line. With a flush she tore it from its soggy wrapper, the wetted fiber parting in her eager fingers, and she read the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what he had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise."

ment was flooding her cheek with red and she chattered and laughed as she had not done for years.

But after dinner the gaiety and effervescence faded quickly and Mrs. Dandridge went early to her room. She mounted the stair with her arm thrown about Shirley's pliant waist. At her door she kissed her, looking at her with a strange smile. "How curious," she said, as if to herself, "that it should have happened today!"

The reading-lamp had been lighted on her table. She drew a slim gold chain from the bosom of her dress and held to the light a little locket-brooch it carried. It was of black enamel, with a tiny laurel-wreath of pearls on one side encircling a single diamond. The other side was of crystal and covered a baby's russet-colored curl. In her fingers it opened and disclosed a miniature at which she looked closely for a moment.

Her eyes turned restlessly about the room. It had been hers as a girl, for Rosewood had been the old Garland homestead. It seemed now all at once to be full of calling memories of her youth.

"How strange that it should have been today!" It had been on Shirley's lips to question, but the door had closed, and she went slowly down stairs. She sat a while thinking, but at length grew restless and began to walk to and fro across the floor, her hands clasped behind her head so that the cool air filled her flowing sleeves. In the hall she could hear the leisurely kon-kon-kon of the tall clock. The evening outside was exquisitely still and the metallic monotone was threaded with the airy fiddle-fiddle of crickets in the grass and punctuated with the rain-fall clasp of a frog.

Shirley stepped lightly down to the wet grass. Looking back, she could see her mother's lighted blind. All around the ground was spotted with rose-petals, looking in the squares of light like bloody rain. She skinned the lawn and ran a little way down the lane. A shuffling sound presently fell on her ear.

"Is that you, Uncle Jefferson?" she called softly.

"Yes'm!" The footsteps came nearer. "It's me, Miss Shirley." He uttered noiselessly, and she could see his bent form vibrating in the gloom. "Yo' reck'n Ah done ferget?"

"No, indeed. I knew you wouldn't do that. How is he?"

"He right much better," he replied in the same guarded tone. "Doctah he say he be all right in er few days, yo' he-gotter lay up er while. Dat was er ugly nip he got f'om dat 'spilabach' reply."

"Do you think there can be any others about the grounds?"

"No'm. Dey mos'ly keeps ter de ma'sh-lan' on er runs whah de ud-dah-bresh ez thick. I gwinter fix dat ter-morrow. Mars' Valiant he tell me ter grub et all out en make er bon-fish ob."

"That's right, Uncle Jefferson. Good night, and thank you for coming."

She started back to the house, when his voice stopped her.

"Miss Shirley, yo' don' keer of de ole man geddahs two er three ob dem roses?"

"Seems lak young mars' moughty f'om ob dem. He got one in er glass but es mos' dald now."

"Wait a minute," she said, and disappeared in the darkness, returning

quickly with a handful which she put in his grasp.

"There!" she whispered, and slipped back through the perfumed dark.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

T. O. BROADDUS

DEALER IN

Fresh Meats, Corn and Dried Beef

FRESH AND SMOKED

TONGUES

All Refrigerator Meats

PHONE 39

RESIDENCE PHONE 239

134 2d St., Richmond, Ky.

Boot and Shoe

REPAIRING!

By Coffey Bros

At Parrish's Livery Stable

All work done with Neatness and Dispatch. Prices Most Reasonable and SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!

Please Give Us A Trial Job.

Pekin Duck Eggs

At Madison County Poultry Show, Dec. 10-18, 1913, we won 1st and 2nd Cock, 1st and 2nd Hen; 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Cock-erel. Our first pen is headed by "Kentucky Choice" first cockerel, mated to six hens all winners. Eggs \$1.00 per doz.

Geo. B. DeJarnette, Phone 4633 Richmond, Ky. R R 4

ment was flooding her cheek with red and she chattered and laughed as she had not done for years.

But after dinner the gaiety and effervescence faded quickly and Mrs. Dandridge went early to her room. She mounted the stair with her arm thrown about Shirley's pliant waist. At her door she kissed her, looking at her with a strange smile. "How curious," she said, as if to herself, "that it should have happened today!"

The reading-lamp had been lighted on her table. She drew a slim gold chain from the bosom of her dress and held to the light a little locket-brooch it carried. It was of black enamel, with a tiny laurel-wreath of pearls on one side encircling a single diamond. The other side was of crystal and covered a baby's russet-colored curl. In her fingers it opened and disclosed a miniature at which she looked closely for a moment.

Her eyes turned restlessly about the room. It had been hers as a girl, for Rosewood had been the old Garland homestead. It seemed now all at once to be full of calling memories of her youth.

"How strange that it should have been today!" It had been on Shirley's lips to question, but the door had closed, and she went slowly down stairs. She sat a while thinking, but at length grew restless and began to walk to and fro across the floor, her hands clasped behind her head so that the cool air filled her flowing sleeves. In the hall she could hear the leisurely kon-kon-kon of the tall clock. The evening outside was exquisitely still and the metallic monotone was threaded with the airy fiddle-fiddle of crickets in the grass and punctuated with the rain-fall clasp of a frog.

Shirley stepped lightly down to the wet grass. Looking back, she could see her mother's lighted blind. All around the ground was spotted with rose-petals, looking in the squares of light like bloody rain. She skinned the lawn and ran a little way down the lane. A shuffling sound presently fell on her ear.

"Is that you, Uncle Jefferson?" she called softly.

"Yes'm!" The footsteps came nearer. "It's me, Miss Shirley." He uttered noiselessly, and she could see his bent form vibrating in the gloom. "Yo' reck'n Ah done ferget?"

"No, indeed. I knew you wouldn't do that. How is he?"

"He right much better," he replied in the same guarded tone. "Doctah he say he be all right in er few days, yo' he-gotter lay up er while. Dat was er ugly nip he got f'om dat 'spilabach' reply."

"Do you think there can be any others about the grounds?"

"No'm. Dey mos'ly keeps ter de ma'sh-lan' on er runs whah de ud-dah-bresh ez thick. I gwinter fix dat ter-morrow. Mars' Valiant he tell me ter grub et all out en make er bon-fish ob."

"That's right, Uncle Jefferson. Good night, and thank you for coming."

She started back to the house, when his voice stopped her.

"Miss Shirley, yo' don' keer of de ole man geddahs two er three ob dem roses?"

"Seems lak young mars' moughty f'om ob dem. He got one in er glass but es mos' dald now."

"Wait a minute," she said, and disappeared in the darkness, returning

quickly with a handful which she put in his grasp.

"There!" she whispered, and slipped back through the perfumed dark.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

T. O. BROADDUS

DEALER IN

Fresh Meats, Corn and Dried Beef

FRESH AND SMOKED

TONGUES

All Refrigerator Meats

PHONE 39

RESIDENCE PHONE 239

134 2d St., Richmond, Ky.

Boot and Shoe

REPAIRING!

By Coffey Bros

At Parrish's Livery Stable

All work done with Neatness and Dispatch. Prices Most Reasonable and SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!

Please Give Us A Trial Job.

Pekin Duck Eggs

At Madison County Poultry Show, Dec. 10-18, 1913, we won 1st and 2nd Cock, 1st and 2nd Hen; 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Cock-erel. Our first pen is headed by "Kentucky Choice" first cockerel, mated to six hens all winners. Eggs \$1.00 per doz.

Geo. B. DeJarnette, Phone 4633 Richmond, Ky. R R 4



CHIEF FACTOR IN NATIONAL DEGENERACY.